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June 62.*

Samuel Laman Blanchard (1754-67)
(Retired London 1874)

LYRIC OFFERINGS,

BY

LAMAN BLANCHARD.

“ Our poesy is as a gum, which oozeth
“ From whence 'tis nourished.”

Timon of Athens.



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TO

CHARLES LAMB

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A Poet's Bride.

I.

SHE stood beside the ruin of a wall
Painted and carved; where unplucked flowers and moss
O'ergrew the beauty of the ruling Cross:
And sainted foreheads, which in other time
Had bowed their earth in heaven's cloud-columned hall,
Were greenly wreathed in mockery of age.
And here a bank its purple shadow kept
Above a lake, where Hope perchance had wept,
Ere yet a tear was made the mirror of a crime.
And here a monument whose ice-like page
Dropt as the day perused it—though a bard
Had found therein the coldness of reward:
Dark trees were dying round it. Farther on
A gray and falling bridge sent gentle strife

Through waters, which, unstained with human life,
Made music mid the roots that twined the stone.
And far beyond a plain, where living forms
Flashed in the lustre of warm summer hours,
And a thick world of forest, whose deep tune
And shadows stretched where no sear leaves were strewn,
Stood hills, the hiding-place of sunny storms
That laughed amid the light in sudden showers.

II.

SHE looked not on the pride of marble, built
By mortal hands ; but happy, yet afraid
Of her sweet soaring, still unweighed by guilt,
Gazed on the light that man could never shade,
Nature's first spirit. O'er the sands she strayed
Mute as a wish within a human breast ;
And ever where her step its footmark made
Some wave did woo its faintness into rest.
Or, as the fairy wind, her travels passed
O'er buds and leaves, that bowed but did not break.
Her heart was as a vase where Love at last
Had found a warmth to keep his flowers awake ;
A twilight fount, whose varied currents take
The hue of heaven and fall with it to earth,
Lending life beauty, and affliction mirth.

Her eyes had many shadows, as each dye,
Each tinge of thought, dissolved into its sky.
Their lids encircled with small beams of gold
Were silver clouds ; and shewed the sun behind
A world of deepening blue,—that chased the cold
Left on her temples by some wandering wind ;
Feeding with light, or sending fitful showers
To wash her warm cheek's fondest passion-flowers.

III.

Her lips released the music which the lute
Of her soft tongue discoursed : or if 'twas mute,
A living whisper, a perpetual breath,
Almost a sigh, did on her lips remain ;
As if 'twould rather linger in such death
Than fly to life where louder breathings reign.
O'er the transparent clearness of her brow
Her hair, like a fine waterfall, waved down
Bathing the pliant marble of her neck ;
Whose native light streamed through without a speck,
Now flashing out in snowiness, and now
Hiding its glory in a ringlet's crown.
Her waist love-zoned ; her veins seemed heaven's blue,
And their bright blood the sunshine that runs through.
Simple, yet robed in all that dignifies ;

Gifted with beauty's artless eloquence ;
Her look fell humble, as ashamed to rise,
And her thin hand upraised its innocence
To screen (in vain) those spirit-lighted eyes.

IV.

A Poet's heart beat for her in that hour,
And gave its pride to grace her single power ;
Though he had taught life's sleep to dream and think
Of shapes unmet with, save in death's far sky,
Which his youth pined for—yet on earth each link
Of his soul's chain had been some ardent eye.
And there stood she to whom the poet's line
Seemed hope's true calendar of wild desire ;
Whose speech was music, whose unwasting fire
Burned on her gentle heart as on a shrine.
Their eyes perceive each other's beauty, growing
With too much splendour to be gazed upon ;
But only felt to tremble in its flowing,
With fear that fetters not the hope it girds ;
While as he speaks, all cold concealment gone,
A silver sigh answers his golden words.

V.

And that brief moment of the heart's unveiling
Is worth its long years of succeeding light ;

For every coming hour must find it failing
With hopes that may return not—onward sailing
Until its voyage shall be wrecked in night,
And all things darken in the sinking sight.
Not thus with these—the poet who had seen
Earth's splendour fade before him ; and the bride
Whom his stript breast now sheltered in its pride—
In whom no thought recoiled on what had been,
But clasped the heart whereof she felt the queen,
And feared no darkness as the daylight died.
Each was the other's life : their passion seemed
All that hath e'er been found, or feigned, or dreamed ;
The atmosphere and earth, the sky, the shade—
All which was theirs to see, and all that cannot fade.

VI.

Their melancholy was but deeper joy,
Too deep for smiles—for he was marked with grief ;
And she, though sunnier thoughts the spell destroy,
Was fashioned in the sweetest starriest time
E'er whispered of in poet's midnight rhyme ;
And her pale gloom had ever felt relief
In token of a morrow. Now they were
'Throned on the bosom of their love, uniting
In one small circle all that least can err,

Sting and deceive, with all that most can bless,
Support and shield in virtue's pathlessness.
They winged them o'er the fields of air, alighting
In some lone spot to talk on fairy themes ;
Or twined within the hollow of a shell
Whose sea-voice sang to them, steered their true dreams
Where never mortal eye hath seen how well
The beautiful unenvied things of ocean dwell.
They met the winds together ; walked the space
Of their serene dominion as a meadow,
Reading strange poetry on heaven's face,
Translated by the heart. Their spirits rode
On a loose rose-leaf or a flying shadow,
Looking for happiness ; and in such quest
Its ample heaven inhaling, as afar
His fleet heart's horses bore her willing car.
They gazed upon their vastness of abode,
And asked not if the traveller Time should rest ;
They knew no measure in mortality.
And if the heavens should change they could not guess,
If the pale earth should shrink beneath the sea,
And the large sun roll blank and shadowless.

VII.

Around his heart she hovered like a bird
Secure of its firm nest ; his faintest word

Called sudden light into her love-taught eyes,
And bound her in a chain of ecstasies.
She sent rich-laden sighs from out her soul,
And caused fair smiles and dew-like tears to sit
In his heart's honeysuckles ; or on the scroll
Of the vast shore his haunting image traced,
And wept to see the waters razing it.
Or harped some magic words of love misplaced,
Then clung in sweet conviction to her own,
Breathing her winged wishes through her eyes,
That trembled as they flew. And on a throne
Built in a little skiff, impelled by sighs
And launched on tears (a picture of man's love),
They drifted in the morning of the moon—
He on her heart which lulled him still too soon ;
Whilst his illumined features mutely move
With the strange life within ; till it would fly
Like a quick cloud before the wakening eye.

VIII.

She watched him like a star, till sleep would seal
Her fervid eyes ; till each sweet sense would reel,
Yet never tiring, with deep prayers and hope,
And love that gazing could no longer feel,
But burned and burned—too strangely to reveal.
Then safely bounding from some daisied slope,

She passed her fingers o'er his brow, and wrought
A spell of peace around each struggling thought.
She studied how his secret pain to win
That she might bear it, though 'twere sharp with sin.
Still waiting on his eye as her life's king
That motioned her still purpose; from the bee
That gave him its true wealth she wooed the sting,
And balmed his worldly heart with Love's own surgery.
In earth's dim chamber she did hang a lamp,
Gilding its walls with cheerfulness, and breathed
Strength in the sinking fire that chased the damp;
And as he left the chilling crowd she flew
His love to kindle and his hate subdue;
Binding his shattered feelings, till he sheathed
That withering fury—smiling in the hue
The truant tincture of a poet's mind,
That feels a joy in rest which flight could never find.

IX.

His wearied feet she bathed with pleasant waters;
And with a magic care she treasured up
The dew of morning in a lily's cup,
For the noon's banquet, not produced by slaughters,
Which she did spread in such peace-haunting bowers
That all the year seemed sown with long and happy hours.

And when Night's wing hath skimmed the purple air,
And fond hearts sleep within a breast as fair,
Her's throbbed before him, or enthralled beside,
Answered its nature's name—a poet's bride.
In every season, scene, and wearying trial,
Still rose she as the light on his heart's dial;
Folding his bosom from each naked woe,
The storm above and frozen world below.
In rage, compassion, pride—in that disdain
Which knows no terror and which owns no pain,
In the strange frenzy of that full belief
Which finds imagined rapture in dull grief,
In those wild moments of unearthliness
When mortals with the dead, not living, hold
Their spiritual converse—she did press
Still as his own; a wanderer from life's fold
To share his herbless mountain and bleak waste,
And mould her beauty to her shepherd's taste.
To have no prompter but his look—no song
But Love's deep whisper which contained no wrong.

X.

At the year's dawn pale coronals she twined
To screen him from the sun, whose furious ray
She locked in her parched heart; and then resigned
Her burning wealth to warm his wintry day.

And lovelier were the leaves that took their birth
From that fair stem than e'er have dropt to earth
High on Affection's mount its tops partook
Heaven's holiest light, its root earth's clearest brook.
Formed to depend, and yet majestic made ;
To bend in pliancy, yet rise unchecked,
Save by the hand that clung to it for aid
When Hope's bold galley on the world lay wrecked.
Branching and budding to its master's hand,
A breath might stir it, whirlwinds not command ;
Gracing the calm—or, struck by sudden thunder,
With bending top it saved the blossoms under.
In the wide wilderness it had no brother ;
A gentle sky bedewed it in pure love ;
And though it shared the sorrow of its mother,
Rooted in dust, its bright brow waved above.

XI.

She lived as lives the moon for her dark lord,
Or rainbow, scabbard of the tempest's sword ;
Thus like a mountain shadow, broad or brief
As the sun ruleth ; or a bird's bright grief
Loving the beam that blinds it—thus lived she
For him who lived for all—whose heart and mind
Were of one essence, mixed and most refined ;

Whose moral was a deep unhiding sea ;
Though men in life ne'er ventured on its glory,
They found in death the truth of his strange story.
Thus lived they in the world things of the sky,
With hopes that could not falter, love not die.
Their lives a secret from the vulgar throng,
Their very names unsyllabled in song.
To poets and their brides alone is given
Passion like theirs to light earth's path to heaven.
And they were circled by Love's fairies there—
Daughters bird-voiced, but more than cygnets fair,
Learning and lispng joy—and sons with wreathed hair.

XII.

They were united where no human ear
Drank their deep vow, and where no human gaze
Startled their still intensity of praise ;
Where feet save theirs ne'er wandered, nor huge piles
Of turrets and tall porticoes appear,
Wild nature mocking with smooth symmetry.
The clouds in maiden meekness fled the smiles
Of their bright lover, blushing into eve.
In heaven's high arch showed nothing made to die,
Where mortal pride ne'er led its pageantry,
And mortal fame had wrought not to achieve

Its sculptured triumph on a lifeless stone.
All shapes looked free, yet fastened ; most alone
And yet encompassed by society.
In the far valley camels caught the wealth
Poured from the liberal mountain, fitted yet
For their unladen lives and sunny health ;
And o'er a modest, mute, clear rivulet
That gushed at a hill's foot, a lone tree hung,
Sending its leafy shade to pay the debt
Of its green nourishment : and all day here
Came happy bands of never-hunted deer,
Whose footsteps bent the mountain-nests among
Ne'er frightened bird, or lushed its merry tongue.

XIII.

Then might the bard and his young Eve confer
Of lands too sacred for the serpent's trail,
Free paradises where no hand might err.
They turned their eyes on a most gentle dale,
Gracious, like morning standing on its shore
Ready to sail, for it did seem no more
Than the fleet gardens of the firmament.
There light and music, line and odour blent,
Played round their senses, beamed into their blood.
Gales, trembling with their freight, mild lightning sent

Into the bosoms of unwearied streams,
That for the love of flowers still poured their flood,
And told their wave-lipped secrets as they went.
And lilies bowed their heads, as with love-dreams,
To look on the gay jewels, which the hand
Of human vanity ne'er dived for: wings
Of most minute and perishable things
Slept, as if rested on immortal land,
In leaves that hardly hid them, and which floated
Like little ships upon their sea of light.
Each object wore the air of one devoted,
Filled with rich sympathies of sound and sight.

XIV.

Bees at perpetual springs in honey-draughts
Drank to the health of the gay sun, and hived
Treasure unvalued where no theft had thrived;
In lasting homes—where Winter never wafts
Its piercing blight, but floats unhurting by,
Leaving a cool repose in the o'erheated sky.
In the green boughs and on the glittering ground
Were bowers for gentle birds, such as ne'er dropt
At fowler's foot, or with unheeded sound
Fluttered on brazen spire or ruined spot,
Or peaceful thatch of cotter ivy-topped.

And there they flourished in their changeless lot
Within pavilions wove of tendrils rare ;
And nothing saw they that might be forgot,
But all that moved in the delighted air
Stilled at their melodies and grew more fair.

XV.

And blood of lambs not destined for the knife
Of luxury or of sacrifice, atoning
For man's proud evil with their harmless life,
Ran pure as mountain water, calmly clear :
And fed with freedom hearts unworn with moaning.
Goats climbed the hilly places without fear
Glad with continual pasture, where each blade
Did seem to bear a separate shape and shade,
Growing in green luxuriance. Vineyards yield
Their purpling drink up to the thirsty day,
And a tall wood flings forth its olive shield
Where curious forms of limpid currents stray.
O'er grassy pinnacles a pine-tree soared
Sun-bronzed, like Triumph on a pedestal ;
And groves of ever-ripened fruits afford
Delicious rest and banqueting, and all
That Nature's holiest hand refineth unadored.

XVI.

And all the living verdure grows so well
No soft small worm hath life amid its roots ;
And through the air no sound unechoed shoots,
And not a leaf but whose light curl can tell
Of waters playing on their coral flutes :
No sigh or sorrow, or heart-heard farewell,
Or sharper wail when worldly promise fell—
Leaving the heart to break or find its fruits
Black with a deadly bloom—to feel its fame
But folly, disappointment and dumb shame.
Here nothing lived that owned an earthly law :
Sincerity and Fearlessness were by ;
And each seemed kindred to the scenes it saw
Break on its separate nature, from an eye
Which guiltless oped at morn and closed as merrily.
The air not dark and damp with human ills
Was as a heavenly breath, serene, endued
With warmer life and truer principles ;
With woman's faith not man's ingratitude.
Nature, amid the rich romantic scene,
Assumed the likeness of a faery queene,
Marking with sunny wand her pleasant circles green.

XVII.

Here among scenes which the pale tempest pities,
Sighing along the desert and the waves;
Here unprophaned beneath the breath of cities,
Nor humbled by the height of painted domes
(Fit pride for kings and wonder of rude slaves),
These two united were. Upon the earth,
Heaven's altar first, they knelt and saw there homes
Formed for all time—for mournfulness and mirth.
O'er chains like theirs but transient torture plays,
Whose links are forged from ever-pliant rays.
Round the fair world they looked and saw no error;
All there was hope, not precipiced by terror,
But laughing like an infant through a dream
Which ne'er might waken to a sadder theme.
Their creed is written on each other's heart,
And sealed with truth that no false hand can part.
—And o'er them flies the day, but leaves behind
A track where the moon glides, with stars strewn o'er,
Like jewels in the night-sea; and they find
A bird is lingering by, unseen before,
With crest of crimson lightening more and more,
As the sun droppeth on his drowsy shore.

XVIII.

And as a seraph-guide its wings did shew
The path from that proud place, and did illumine

With darting lights, and filled with rare perfume,
The herbage and the air; that held no foe
To the sweet rites which none beside may know.
And now the bird hath severed the gray gloom,
A winged devotee of love; and under
A palm-tree's ceiling shows a shrine of wonder,
Surrounded with sweet flowers—some hung like bells
And breathed upon, as a faint ringing tells:
And some when evening closed them shut within
The beam which they had loved; and these shed round
That mystic couch the light which they did win.
Each thing displayed a beauty so profound
That heaven's pure eyes look down and see no sin,
And the presiding moon hears not a sound
In her fine hall more happy than the sighs,
That break from the bride's bosom to apprise
Her poet lord, as falls the last disguise
From her full wish; and on the threshold fair
Of that safe structure, a scarce-murmured air
Invites her further.—They have entered there.

1824.

The Spirit of Poesy.

WHAT is it but the living voice
Heard in the earth and air,
Bidding a blade of grass rejoice
That man may not despair !
What is it but the air of heaven
Along an earthly lyre,
Whence drop the snows that death has driven
To quench its chords of fire.
Its music mingles with the singing
With which the seas and shores are ringing,
When nothing folds the mystic sense
And all is naked and intense.
It is the voice of wondrous things
Covered and crowned with magical wings,
Whose rustling as they stir on high
Wakes in the heart of heaven a spell of Poesy.

The Moon is a harp in yon hall,
Whence beams and strange harmonies fall;
Its flashing o'er myriads flew,
But its voice was bestowed for a few.
It burns in the delicate air,
But hark! are its melodies there?
The light may be seen on the main,
But the sound must be sought in the brain.

And Stars are voiced with pleasant songs
Whose sweetness to the night belongs;
Notes that sail along the sea—
You wonder how such notes could be,
Weeping for them as they flee
Through the wave mysteriously.
Measures made to steal and tinkle
Through the crystal veins of light;
Poet-spirits born to twinkle
On the breast of Night.
Many eyes behold them glisten—
Rich the ear that stays to listen.

Each form of thin and pallid Mist
That passes and melts, by the starlight kissed,

The natural smoke from the morning's lamp,
Hath a sound as it walks, though you hear no tramp ;
And from rounds of fairy wreathing
Comes a meek and mournful breathing—
Murmured passion, sad and holy—
All that's sweet is melancholy.
Clouds that look like swans, and steer
O'er the sky-sea calm and clear,
Keep like them their treasured tune
From the hot and gandy noon,
Gliding through the live-long day
To the precincts of the moon—
There to sing themselves away
For the beauty of a ray,
Dying still too soon.

And some are rocked and twined
In the arms of the passionate Wind ;
And others wander from their kind
To listen a sea-lute's plaint,
Which tells of a star that had pined
For something which it could not find—
Save where a sun-taught hand would paint
A shadow, tremulous and faint,
On the bosom of a wave,
Where at last it gained a grave.

And some there are that love to swim
Across the Light they scarcely dim;
Each turning to its fount a face
Smiling like the seraphim,
Whom they image whilst they chase
Their fellows of the radiant limb.

Lo ! thousands are strewing
Snow-flowers on the way,
Where the morn is renewing
A tenderer day.

And some are entwining
Their innocent forms
To keep her from shining
On envious storms.
Some dare the beholding
Of Day when he wakes ;
And some are seen folding
Their sun-dropping flakes.
Like birds how they quiver,
Those children of Light :
They drop on that river
Of radiant light.

h

Now the water-harp is strung,
And the quiet Wave hath sung ;

Beautiful billows with faces of green
That smile on the glittering gulf between;
Each hath its crown and each its song,
Borne on the musical breeze along.

The waters sing to the shore,
The forests sing to the sea,
All that hath motion in land or in ocean
Is gifted with minstrelsy.
The torrents are sparkling and proud
Talking to the vales aloud;
Gently breaking from a bubble,
Voices breathe their pensive trouble;
Mists that slumber on the hill
Murmur through their dreaming still;
And the winds salute the mountains,
And the stars believe the fountains.
There's a noise within the flowers
Which they whisper to the hours—
'Tis to tell how they are sighing
For the serenade of showers—
'Tis to tell how they are dying
For things that are faithless and flying.

A Rainbow! it is heaven's lyre,
Which Passion and fair Peace inspire.

Nothing's sweet that will not sound it,
Nothing's bright but mingles round it;
Each young colour hath a chord
Quivering with some trusting word—
Every word betrays the hue
Where its brief existence grew.
Boweth not the storm, subdued
To its charmed and tranquil mood?—
Symbol in the air suspended
Of the soul, when life is ended!
View its wreaths of fadeless fire—
Hearken, oh! Earth, to Heaven's lyre.

Is it some fanciful belief, or are
The spirits of our being borne afar
Amid yon rainbow, that the free warm thought
May live where not an ice-chain may be wrought?
Are not all hopes and infant promisings
Reposing yonder, without wound or wings?
All that is beautiful below, and pure,
Doth it not melt to bliss unchilled and sure?
Are these frail fancies? that romantic bow
Hath man's wild poesy and woman's glow.
O! could the heart's first music meet the *sight*,
Twould take the likeness of that rainbow's light;

For there as in the heart all passions mix
That change with the rich sun and will not fix.
Its azure hath the charm of some fine eye
Which Genius looked from in its ecstacy:
Anon with a young maiden's blood it burns
As her cheek's rose into a lily turns;
That green hath formed some lover's diadem
Ere hope had withered on its living stem.
Each hue hath language—all the million dyes
Quake with the noise of kisses and of sighs.
And none are silent—listening while they bless
They gleam and speak in fluent tenderness.
Dreams are their subject, hopes not meant to fail,
And love, which is our nature's nightingale.

Things that lighten, things that fly,
Own the spells of Poesy.
Through creation, bright or black,
Winged Poesy, thou piercest;
If in peace the gentlest track,
If in pride, the fiercest.
Not a wind but lisps thy name,
Not a flower but makes replying;
In the frost-work and in flame
I behold thee lying.

All that's frantic, fair, and high,
Is of Nature's Poesy.

A minstrel is sitting alone
Upon a white and wordless stone,
That seals up the bed of a gentle bride
Whose mortal hath immortal grown,
And left no track in the human tide—
Perhaps she were his own.
The sigh that trembled o'er her clay
May hold some speech of love for her;
He trusts it to yon fainting ray
That upward takes its silent way—
A fleet and faithful messenger.
And many a fond dream-whispered word
Upon his heart is sweetly sinking;
As if a slight and snowy bird
Within his brain that instant stirred
Its wing, and answered his mute thinking.

Heard ye the murmur on a Mother's tongue
O'er what was made to die, but died too young;
A heart that held through darkness and through pain,
And when the light fell on it—it was slain.

I heard her anguish though its seat was far—
O! air and voice of Dreams, how true ye are!
And there were other sounds that did discourse
And bind my soul with a most gentle force.
I caught the breathings of a girl whose mind
Was haunted by a shadow, left behind
By some illumined figure that had walked
Across her heart, betraying as it talked.
That heart beneath her flesh, as you may see
The ruby midst the water's purity,
I saw, and heard its language—'twas of tears,
Of longings, memories, of all save fears.
I looked, and it was wasting sigh by sigh,
Until at last 'twas nothing. I stood by
And saw it vanish—a light, veined leaf,
Whose summer life a breath had made so brief.
Then strayed I near a grating, and my mind
Wondered and wept that aught should be confined.
I glanced betwixt the bars—it was a space
Narrow and damp, and full of foul disgrace:
Its walls were phrenzy-figured. And upon
That dungeon floor appeared a skeleton.
One knee was bent—its prayer seemed rage and pride:
I saw the right arm moulder from its side.
The other raised had tried to seize the grate—
Where day divulged the lineaments of hate.

The chainer had been chained—the idol bowed
And paid deep homage to a scornful crowd.
But all things failed him save the chain and cell :
I breathed with music—'twas the Enslaver's knell.

But soon far other notes serene and mild
Came o'er my soothed spirit—'twas a Child
Lisping a blessing. Then a Dove appeared
Whose bosom had been robbed of all it reared.
And soon a breeze came flowing thither, bright
With many Insects, crimsoning the light.—
Then on the sands a Maiden sought a ship,
With words that fell like life-drops from the lip.—
A Slave came forth in bonds, which he did burst,
And stood all free as man arose at first.—
Two Birds, with dusky wings and breast of sun,
Were circled in a gilded cage : the one
Fluttered and sang, and tried to gain my look,
And from its plume the glossiest feather shook.
The other stirred not, sang not ; it had lost
The fire of song within it's prison's frost.
It was too delicate, too proud to live—
I feared to breathe, it seemed so sensitive.
At last it moaned ; then gazed upon the wire
And dropped—a thing to weep for and admire !

The other lightened round the cage, and shewed
No sign of sorrow in its lone abode ;
But still it sang exultingly. I sighed—
I could not love it like the one that died.

The light partook of an enchantment's hue :
A thousand fairy eyes came twinkling through ;
And a young bard some pensive treasure sought
Where waters lulled him in his starry thought.
But mark how from yon lattice looks an eye
In fondness forth, yet half despairingly :
And one that worships it, that grief to share,
A moment stands—he is no longer there.
His step is quick yet low ; his sight seems dim
And bent on earth—but her's is fixed on him.
How rich the strength that through her veins hath ran !
How proud is woman suffering for man !
She sleeps, she smiles ; day hath no dreams like these.
Her eyes are closed—it is her heart that sees.

All beauty hath a voice ; and I have found
Life hath no pleasure like the sense of Sound.
And earth hath still a heaven for ears and eyes,
Since Poesy doth teach all hearts to harmonize.

THE SULTANA

PREPARING FOR HER BATH.



[DESCRIPTIVE OF A PICTURE, THE PRODUCTION OF A
FRIEND.]

THE Glory of the Light hath died away,
The dazzled Earth grows dim. And now the moon
(A silver seal upon the closing day)
Steals through the twilight; and a tranquil tune
Comes from the deep to soothe the sun's decay.
Heaven's harp hath ceased; but many an echo fair
In mellow music pants upon the air.

The sun hath sunk; but lo! there is a light
Richer than yon unsteadfast stars reveal:
The noon hath melted into chilling night,
Yet can the soul a warmth and freshness feel:
The signs and sounds of day have perished quite,
Yet hath the quiet earth a breathing given
Sweeter than a'! the varied sounds of heaven.

Not from the lamp within yon radiant room
Ascends the new-born beam ; nor from the pride
Of Eastern art arises a perfume
That fills a scene by beauty sanctified ;
But there, arrayed in all that Luxury's loom
Hath woven for her children, is reclined
A fair and fond creation of the mind.

From her, and from the splendour of her face,
The night hath caught its lustre wild and warm ;
All that is there, of grandeur or of grace,
Its proud impression traces from the form,
That, like the ruling pleasure of the place,
Shows in the midst the figure of a dream
Where Love had learnt his first and tenderest theme.

Like to the fount of old, whereof to drink
Was to inhale the fatal fire of love :
So things, not doomed from such delight to shrink,
Beneath her glance grow beautiful, above
All other tints of beauty. On the brink
Of a new joy she now resigns her veil,
And what she looks on ceases to be pale.

'Twas feigned in early time, and men have hung
Their faith upon the dream, that Love was born
Of Beauty : let the truth at length be sung.
Beauty was born of Love : for pride and scorn
Have crept to him in smiles, and Time looked young.
With him the winter is no longer cold,
And summer views its dust transformed to gold.

So all about her varies with her eyes,
Beauty the sure effect, but Love the cause ;
Though in her veins a haughty transport vies
With natural tenderness ; whose milder laws
Her spirit may o'erleap but not despise.
Thus, softly stern, she points to the sublime,
The splendour and the sweetness of her clime.

Her slightly closing eyelids well express,
With the full pride of passion, and the sense
Of power but half displayed—the consciousness
That only joy, unmingled and intense,
Is present to her eyes ; which, sent to bless
The turbaned tyrant of some lavish land,
See all its ripe fruits falling to her hand.

But on her smooth cheek shows a settled flush
Of Love's fine fever: not the single hue
Of youth for its own beauties taught to blush,
But a mute mingling of emotions true,
Peaceful yet all impassioned; till a gush
Of glory o'er her brow its way hath won,
And marks a fond Sultana of the Sun.

Her slaves are ready—by her couch they shine,
The genii of her passions. From her arm,
All richly rounded by a taste divine,
One bending girl, with many a graceful charm,
The glittering circlet draws. But the deep mine
Of ocean hath no pearl like that soft skin,
The sky no tincture like the tide within.

Close at her side another damsel stands,
A sun-taught teacher of voluptuous lore,
Ready to fan her; or with glancing hands
To scatter sweets upon the silken floor;
Or loose her bosom from its gentle bands—
That flashes from beneath its slight cimar,
As through a cloud the lightning of a star.

But chief a sable slave, of quaintest mien,
And garb grotesque and costly, stoops to raise
Her veil, as some dark vapour may be seen
Unfolding the fair day. And he surveys
Love's early sunshine, fervent but serene,
And feels his frozen spirit warm the while,
His face uncouthly curling to a smile.

And with that aged slave awaits a train
Of youthful figures, winged at her will;
And all about are glistening tokens lain
Of exquisite device, and wrought with skill.
All that can breathe delight, and banish pain
From earth's bright circle, gathers round a spot
Where grief might well be hushed and guilt forgot.

Thus in the centre of the group, impressed
With the full life of that luxuriant hour,
Shaming the gems of her imperial vest,
Yet softly languid, fainting like a flower,
Mid draperies of silk her light limbs rest;
And thus, beneath the charm of summer airs,
The sweet Sultana for her bath prepares.

How will the willing waters curl around
Their dainty visitant ! What sparkles clear,
And what a welcome of enraptured sound,
Will rise to meet her on her cool career !
And glancing from her to its marble bound,
Each melting wave, whilst lucidly revealing
Her form, will waken up some pleasant feeling.

There in the night, beneath a silence deep,
Thus whitely visible behold her glide,
A wonder in the waters ! come to steep
In living joy a breast too bright to hide.
Methinks the element would seem to weep
As from each rising limb, in pearly rain,
It drips like dew into its fount again.

And having passed that baptism of pure pleasure—
The weary warmth and deep luxuriance
Of day subsiding to a milder measure—
She wraps her senses in a shadowy trance,
Tempting the night to stay with Hope's own treasure ;
Dim dreams and winged visions—fairy things
That gush from out our sleep like desert springs.

And sad it were, and sad it is, to find
A harsher moral in a fate so fair;
To feel that some dark venom lurks behind,
Like insects that have golden wings, but bear
A poisoned body; to behold the mind,
Where all beside a ripening radiance found,
Barren and blighted on that holy ground.

To see the wings of Freedom flap the dust,
Or view her signs but as the darts of old
That, flying, turned to fire: the simple trust
And truth of life exchanged for caution cold;
The ample theme of Reason undisputed,
And man's high spirit stooping from the skies
Seeking on earth a sensual paradise.

Yet, ah! what marvel if for hearts like her's
The failing mind at last forget to soar!
Circled with joy, and shunning all that stirs
The soul with stronger hopes, it bows before
The altar of a faith which, whilst it errs,
Makes glad our way with pleasures unrepressed,
Till life's loud rapture ends in silent rest.

And for the fair Sultana, if we trace
No cloud upon her cheek, nor sign of woe,
It is her clime that lightens through her face.
And as the Prophet's fabled regions show
Forms that glide shadowless along the space,
 So she on earth, a dream that cannot fade,
 Might move amid the light and leave no shade.

THE CAPTIVE LAMB.

It was a sight to be forgot
When Nature's night shall come ;
A sound, to be remembered not
When Music shall be dumb.
For there are tones that will not share
The fate of the forgotten air,
But haunt with ceaseless hum ;
And there are scenes that fail to quit
The eye, till tears have blinded it.

Mine eye and ear of hue and sound
A quickened sense retain ;
Echo and shade alike are found
Self-stored within my brain :
Yet is there one peculiar sense,
That holds impressions most intense
Of parted bliss or pain,—
And long will these in memory dwell,
Fond inmates of its honied cell.

The sun was wasting through the day,
Above a scene as fair
As ever tempted glance to stay,
And end its wanderings there.
The clear expanse on high was calm,
As though the day dissolved in balm
Upon the healthful air,
To heal the wounds of scattered flowers,
Wind-stricken by the wintry hours.

Voices, of insect and of bird,
Their hymns to heaven addressed;
But chief the summoning chimes were heard
That cheer the fervent breast :
The sun seemed one large amulet
Of love—the day benignly set
Apart for prayer and rest ;
As GOD himself thereon did cease
From labour, hallowing it with peace.

Lo, at each chime, with sober pace
Approached a thoughtful throng :
Virgins, with flushed but placid face,
Their grandsires led along.
From many a sunny winding came
The poor and proud, the swift, the lame—
The sickly and the strong ;
In bands of mingled sex and size—
The fair, the simple, and the wise.

Far other sight anon was mine,

Far other sounds than those
That called the pilgrim to a shrine,

The mourner from his woes.
For, parted from the holy fane
By graves wherein the wept and vain
Lay wrapt in green repose,
'There gleamed just o'er the nettle's head
A low undecorated shed.

Mean and uncouth such place appeared

Amid the landscape wide ;
Perchance its humble walls were reared
To shame what shone beside—
Heaven's temple, banner-graced and gilt ;
Unlike the simple altars built

Ere earth was trod by Pride.
Whate'er its use, its narrow span,
Unwindowed, was not meant for man.

For man, the cheerful hall or hut

May shew what time hath done ;
Whilst spirits glad as his are shut
From freedom and the sun.

Ah ! never did a manly limb
Repose in spot so damp and dim

Since sands were taught to run :
Yet something, lost to Nature's race,
Was living in that tomb like place.

A moan scarce-stifled, long and low,
Betrayed the deepening dart
Of thralldom in that haunt of woe,
And smote upon my heart;
Not answerless: for on my cheek
A paler pity seemed to speak,
In language lost to art,
Even unto heaven for that which tried
To hush the grief it could not hide.

I paused—to hear mine inmost sense
The moan reverberate;
I trod the nettles from the fence,
And shook the fastened gate.
At last a worm-worn cleft I found:—
Within, upon the grassless ground,
There lay—as desolate
As aught that ever missed its dam—
A lone, and meek, and captive Lamb.

The scene was touching to behold;
For glancing round about,
Within all seemed so dusk and cold,
So bright and warm without.
A little Lamb! untimely caught,
Untimely sold—and thither brought!
Condemned at first, no doubt,
(’Tis said to be the will divine)
To die in pangs, that man may dine.

And as it lay with eye half-closed,
And ileece all earth-defiled,
So pent-up, yet to ills exposed—
And helpless, like a child;
What marvel if my fancy deemed
That lonely Lamb a thing that dreamed
Of spots and seasons mild!
Of meadows far away, and brooks
That mirrored its first peaceful looks!

Even as I gazed the captive stirred;
And though no chain was seen,
I thought the sigh my hushed ear heard
A fetter's clank had been.
It rose, and stood beneath a ray
That through the roof had found its way;
Then sought with step serene
The gate; and through a time-worked space
Streamed the full meekness of its face.

And all around its eyes were cast
Most mutely eloquent;
Till on the moss they fixed, at last,
That decked a monument.
Then glancing on each warm green spot,
With all its gambols unforgot,
Back to its bed it went;
There dreaming still of field and flood
To wait—till men should shed its blood.

Meek Lamb! thy moan within my soul
A moral left behind;
For prayer and anthem o'er it stole
More idly than the wind.
I turned from saints, from praisings loud,
To muse on martyrdoms less proud:
And often strays my mind
From all I sought—from all I am—
To think upon that prisoned Lamb.

Sonnets.

I.

YESTERDAY.

PALE pilgrim of the heavens, that late didst glide
With sunbeam-staff the violet vales along,
Where fountains of fresh dew gushed up in song,
To bathe thy golden feet, and then subside—
Last wave that sparkled on Time's ebbing tide—
How are thy bright limbs laid amid the throng
Of vanished days, that drooped o'er earthly wrong,
Seeing how virtue is to vice allied,
And vanished blushing. Sad Yesterday!
Night's winding-sheet is round thee, and the eyes
That found a health—or fever—in thy ray,
And thoughtfully perused on evening skies
Thine elegy, star-lettered,—now away
Turn their brief thoughts of thee, and thus men moralize.

II.

T O - D A Y.

A LIBERÁL worldling, gay philosopher,
Art thou that lift'st thy young and yellow head
O'er the dim burial of the scarce-cold dead—
Building above thy brother's sepulchre
A home of love, that sense might almost err,
Deeming thine end therein to woo and wed
The flower-haired Earth for ever. Yet the red
In yonder west may well such dreams deter!
Yes, thou, all-hailed To-Day! whose outstretched hand
Scatters loose riches on a bankrupt land,
Even thou art but a leaf from off the tree
Of yellowing Time: a grain of glistening sand
Dashed from the waters of that unsailed sea,
Where thou to-night shalt sink, and I as soon may be.

III.

TO-MORROW.

Who shall imagine how thy wing may sweep,
Many and mighty nations laying bare
To blight—war—famine? Who shall say if e'er
The day may burn again?—how men that sleep
May wake, and wander up and down, and keep
Their eyes on the dark east in long despair!
Or, coming, wak'st thou from thy cloudy lair
A Lion-sun? or like a Lark, to reap
Music in heaven for the glad ear of earth?
The signs of many yesterdays appear
But fading sparks on gossip memory's hearth;
Thine are as comets burning. For thy birth
Freedom, half stifled in the clasp of Fear,
Looks o'er a wailing world. The dawn, the dawn, is near!

IV.

WISHES OF YOUTH.

GAILY and greenly let my seasons run :
And should the war-winds of the world uproot
The sanctities of life, and its sweet fruit
Cast forth as fuel for the fiery sun ;
The dews be turned to ice—fair days begun
In peace wear out in pain, and sounds that suit
Despair and discord keep Hope's harpstring mute ;
Still let me live as Love and Life were one :
Still let me turn on earth a childlike gaze
And trust the whispered charities that bring
Tidings of human truth ; with inward praise
Watch the weak motion of each common thing,
And find it glorious—still let me raise
On wintry wrecks an altar to the Spring.

V.

O N T I M E.

To one that marks the quick and certain round
Of year on year, and finds how every day
Brings its gray hair, or bears a leaf away
From the full glory with which life is crowned,
Ere youth becomes a shade and fame a sound;
Surely to one that feels his foot on sand
Unsure, the bright and ever-visible hand
Of Time points far above the lowly bound
Of pride that perishes; and leads the eye
To loftier objects and diviner ends—
A tranquil strength, sublime humility,
A knowledge of ourselves, a faith in friends,
A sympathy for all things born to die,
With cheerful love for those whom truth attends.

VI.

THE CHARM OF SOUND.

THOU that with silenced heart, by stream or glade,
The music of the morn hast haply heard,
When every leaf hath canopied some bird ;
Whose step through wood and wilderness hath strayed
When all the living sunshine dies in shade,
When nothing in the haunted heaven hath stirred,
And earth hath echoed forth no wakening word :—
Oh, come, ere yet the youthful year shall fade,
Among the mountains and the woods once more
Pluck healthful pleasures, such as grew of yore
Wild in the ways of life. The fevered air
Of cities stiflcth Reason, and their roar
Leaves in the soul the silence of despair :
Then come where Thought resides, for Music too is there.

VII.

HIDDEN JOYS.

PLEASURES lie thickest where no pleasures seem,
There's not a leaf that falls upon the ground
But holds some joy, of silence or of sound;
Some sprite begotten of a summer dream.
The very meanest things are made supreme
With innate ecstasy. No grain of sand
But moves a bright and million-peopled land,
And hath its Edens and its Eves, I deem.
For Love, though blind himself, a curious eye
Hath lent me, to behold the hearts of things,
And touched mine ear with power. Thus far or nigh,
Minute or mighty, fixed or free with wings,
Delight from many a nameless covert sly
Peeps sparkling, and in tones familiar sings.

VIII.

INFANCY ASLEEP.

✓
THE fairest thing that human eyes may view
Now breathes beneath my own—a sleeping child,
Smiling amid its thoughts and visions mild :
Its face upturned in hope's pervading hue,
As the glad morning of the mind dawns through.
These wordless lips as yet have only smiled
On life, nor hath an evil taint defiled
Eyes that are closed like flowers—whose tears are dew
From the heart's inmost heaven. Oh! infant heir
Of Nature, in thy fresh and delicate dust
If aught of ill be mingled, 'twere unjust
To deem it thine ; for on thy forehead fair
Sit purity and peace : be ours the trust
That Age shall find them still unchilled by crime or care !

IX.

TO J. O.

I CLASS thee, moral Critic, with the few
Whose simple friendship is a kind of fame ;
On whose unpurchased praise we rest a claim
To glories which the Cæsars never knew.
Thy nature was conceived ere falsehood grew
A fashion in the world, and Wit took shame
To twine a wreath for Wisdom's naked name.
Thus have thy words a power that doth endue
Our dreams with faith, our deeds with gentleness.
Within the mirror of thy single mind
All noble thoughts their clear reflection find ;
And thy calm spirit, shunning all excess—
Keen in its quest of good, to ills resigned—
Pursues its way in smiles, intent to cheer and bless.

X.

LIBERTY.

THERE is a social and a solemn spell,
A spirit in our dust, a dream divine,
Filling the world with inspiration fine,
And making virtue purely visible ;
Whether in hall of state or studious cell,—
Where'er the currents of our life incline.
Oh ! equal LIBERTY ! this power is thine !
For at thy voice, which Instinct knows as well
As doth a child its mother's natural tone,
The darkened soul looks sunward, like a bird
Whose wing hath paused on mountains not its own.
By thee, fair Freedom, in the outeast herd
The seeds of high nobility are sown,
And abject minds are taught the wisdom of a word.

XI.

TO NATURE.

—

SWEET Nature, with thy bosom ever young
In green temptation, and in healthier charms
Than Art hath yet been painted with; whose arms
Have rocked to rest a mind that oft hath clung
To the rich promise of thy secret tongue,
Fulfilled in silence:—Nature, not of those
Who, shunning thy most fond and sure repose,
For crowded cities their high harps have strung,
And poured in thankless ears their rapturous rhyme,—
Forgetting how each hollow flower around
May hold an echo of Fame's answering sound
In natural numbers, simple yet sublime—
O! not of such is he whom changing time
Has only brought a wish to tread thy hallowed ground.

XII.

TO D. W. J.

WHEN I behold the false and flattered state
Which all ambition points at, and survey
The hurried pageants of the passing day,
Where all press on to share a fleeting fate—
Methinks the living triumphs that await
On hours like thine might tempt the proud to stay.
For on a green and all unworldly way
Thy hand hath twined the chaplet of the great,
And the first warmth and fragrance of its fame
Are stealing on thy soul. The time shall be
When men may find a music in thy name,
To rouse deep fancies and opinions free ;
Affection fervid as the Sun's bright flame,
And sympathies unfathomed as the Sea.

XIII.

MORNING.

WAKE from your misty nests—instinctive wake,
Ye fine, and numberless, and sleeping things!
The Infant Saviour of all blossomings
From heaven's blue womb hath passed; and for the sake
Of Earth, and her green family, doth make
In air redemption and soft gloryings.
The world, as though inspired, erectly flings
Its shadowy coronals away, to slake
A holy thirst for light: and, one by one,
The enamoured hills—with many a startled dell,
Fountain and forest—blush before the Sun!
Voices and wings are up, and waters swell;
And flowers, like clustered shepherds, have begun
To ope their fragrant mouths, and heavenly tidings tell.

XIV.

N O O N.

How all the spirits of nature love to greet,
In mystic recognition from the grass,
And cloud, and spray—a warm and vivid class—
The eagle-tiring Noon; 'around whose feet
The glories of the brim-full summer meet:
That reeling Time beholds his sober glass
Turn to a goblet; and the sands that pass
Seem drops of living wine! O, this is sweet,
To see the heavens all open, and the hood
Of crystal Noon flung back! the earth meanwhile
Filling her veins with sunshine—vital blood
Of all that now from her full breast doth smile
(Casting no shadow) on that pleasant flood
Of light, where every mote is some small minstrel's isle.

XV.

EVENING.

ALREADY hath the day grown gray with age ;
And in the west, like to a conqueror crowned,
Is faint with too much glory. On the ground
He flings his dazzling arms ; and, as a sage,
Prepares him for a cloud-hung hermitage,
Where Meditation meets him at the door ;
And all around—on wall, and roof, and floor,
Some pensive star unfolds its silver page
Of truth, which God's own hand hath testified.
Sweet Eve ! whom poets sing to as a bride,
Queen of the quiet—Eden of Time's bright map—
Thy look allures me from my hushed fire-side,
And sharp leaves rustling at my casement tap,
And beckon forth my mind to dream upon thy lap !

XVI.

MIDNIGHT.

THE pulse of Time is stopt: a silentness
Hath seized the waters, and the winds, and all
That motion claims or music natural.
The altar of all life stands victimless.
Of beast or bird, in joyance or distress,
All token sleeps; nor leaf is heard to fall
As Midnight holds her breath! The kingly hall
Is barred—the slave inherits an excess
Of infelt royalty—the exile views
His home in dreams; nay, even the student breaks
From his worn volume, and forgets to muse
On words and worlds—the miser only wakes.
Warming his fingers at a golden heap,
He smiles in Midnight's face, and will not trust to sleep

XVII.

THE MOUNTAINS.

OH, Mountains! on your glorious points sublime,
The threshold of our earth, to stand and see
The seasons on swift wings come forth and flee;
And from the changes of enchanted time
To draw the moral music of my rhyme,—
How full of joy this simple lot would be:
To cushion on the grass my bended knee,
And worship Nature in a clearer clime.
For on the hills have mortal footsteps found
The eagle-nest of Freedom, and a throne
Where Peasant-princes have been proudly crowned.
Full many a stirring air and pastoral tone
Come breathing from them still; and all the ground
Is full of strange delight and glories deeply sown.

XVIII.

NATURAL STUDIES.

To see the grace and glory of the year,
Cradled in leaves, grow with the breath of May,
At whose warm touch the winter melts away,
And all the wakened heaven shows full and clear;
To mark the faint but freshening light appear,
And throw its first fair gold upon the gray,
Giving glad promise of the dazzling day;
To view the mute and labouring night uprear
Its starriness through storms; or trace the tide
Forth from its pebbly prison flowing free—
These link the soul, oh Nature! unto thee;
And in these scenes are figured and implied
The dawn and growth of life, when taught by pride,
The mind disdains the dust, and feels its liberty.

XIX.

THE STATE OF MAN.

Oh ! who can look upon the lofty mind
O'ercome by taunt and tears ; observe the vow
Of princes unfulfilled, and the slow plough
Crushing the peasant's hopes ; the weak resigned
To wrongs—the crafty trampling on the kind ;
The laurel wreathed upon a branded brow,
Hiding, not honouring ; the olive bough
Faded, and cast upon the common wind—
And earth a doveless Ark. Oh ! who can see
How weak the wise, how fallen are the free ;
How Thirst sits pining by the plenteous main,
While Virtue finds her garland but a chain,—
Nor deem the golden hour is still to be,
When Life shall look to heaven exempt from pride and pain.

XX.

IN MEMORY OF KEATS.

MUTE Minstrel of the Eve, pale, mystical,
When one by one comes forth the pensive train
Of things not born for worldly strife and pain,
That cannot fade, though doomed perchance to fall;
Fond Cherisher of passions, fancies, all
Whose essence fills a poet's flower-like home—
I saw but now, within yon distant dome,
A cloud that cast its transitory pall
Across the quivering light: and I did think
That moment on the cold and shadowing shame
With which thy starry spirit hath been crowned.
How vain their torturings were! for thou didst sink
With the first stone cast at thy martyred fame;
How like the snow that's ruined by a sound!

1823.

XXI.

DELIGHT NOT DISTANT.

AROUND man's hearth his dearest blessings meet.
Why look we for a fruit that grows afar
Planted in peril, when free pastures are,
Like promises, spread round our calm retreat !
Man flies the land, to range where billows beat ;
Forsakes his hut, to track the conqueror's car :
Yet he whose eyes but watch some wandering star,
May crush the steadier glow-worm at his feet.
And thus who idly grasp a doubtful good,
In thoughts obscure and passions wild and vain,
Neglect the native pleasures of the blood,
And turn its health and hopes to present pain ;
Missing, for gems deep fixed within the flood,
The readier riches of the fragrant plain.

MY PEN.

NOTHING in the earth or sea
Ever lent itself to me,
As an agency to give
Shape to thought that it might live ;
As an implement to stay
Fancy on her hidden way,
Turning every tone of her's
Into sparkling characters.
Whence drew I the pliant quill
That hath compassed my will ?
Flying fondly here and there
As a feather on the air,—
Sealing each unfinished spell,
Poesy's own Ariel.

Not from light and loving wing
Fresh from the perfumed Spring,

Fanning the red cheek of Morn,
Plumed trophy have I torn.
Not from eagle or from lark,
Milky dove or raven dark ;
Nor from swallow, that forsakes
Heaven when adverse Winter wakes ;
Nor from song-souled nightingale,
With whose rich and raptured tale,
Since the evening stole above,
Poets' ears have fallen in love.

Seas have offered up to men,
Trustingly, a diamond pen ;
Point of crystal, fine and hard,
Many a window-pane hath marr'd,—
And 'tis oft the poet's curse
To mar his little light with verse.
But the light from heaven's halls
On my floor unbroken falls,
Narrow though my lattice seem
To admit the boundless beam ;
And my fingers would despond
Guiding the rich diamond,
That with visible incision
Weeds the thin and thought-like vision.

Some a glassy pen have found
In the revel's wizard round,
Tracing every word in wine
With a relic half divine—
Fragment of a cup let slip
From a foul and lying lip.
Others in the sapless stem

Of a blighted, bloomless flower,
Ministrant have won to them
Of a deep and moral power.
But the glass may pierce a vein,
And the stem a thorn retain;
Thus may gushing blood imbue
Things baptized in wine and dew.

Yet though soon the glow may sink
From that warm and crimson ink,
Richer though it fade to-day,
Glittering tint by tint away,
Is such blood from martyred veins
Than a sea of golden gains:
Or the ink which traitors find—
Traitors to the heart and mind—
Which, like water that begets
Toads and aspics where it wets,

Wakes a spirit to disturb
Fragrant bud and healing herb.

Not a sunbeam is my quill,
Nor a tear-hung icicle ;
Nor an arrow's instant light,
Sharp and fatal in its flight ;
Not a trophy won from man,
Nor splinter from a lady's fan
Steeped in fragrance. 'Tis indeed
But a frail and bending reed,
Plucked by a most listless hand
In a waste and flowerless land,
By the margin of a stream
Where the idle eddies gleam,
Even as hopes within the breast—
Dazzling as they drop to rest.

What is this uncultured waste
But my bosom's fruitless pride ?
What the stream that sparkles past,
But its fleet and living tide ?
Something in ourselves must be
Still our own dependency.

Yet the reed with which I write

Hath a magic power to bless—

Pouring through its tube a light

On my moral wilderness,

That the tempest is forgot,

In a glad and golden lot.

TO ONE DESERTED.

FAIR stem of many hopes, what wind hath borne
This blight upon thee? what hath chilled thy root,
Turning to ashes all its golden fruit?
Whose holy hand hath cast thee forth to mourn,
An exile from thy paradise, where thou
Hadst plucked the bitter joy which fails thee now,
Like summer promises frost-broken. Sure
The hand that smites thy bosom must be pure;
A snow-shower quenching that ill-fated flame
That hath but burned to tinge thy cheek with shame.
No ruffian death should seize so fair a life,
Bleeding like some pale lamb beneath the knife.
Hath not Love's banquet-board been spread for thee?
And the dark poisoner—say, who is he?
What tale is in thine eyes!—each tear a word
That tells such truths as man hath seldom heard.
Oh, it is hard to die by hands which we
Had deemed most gentle; and whose faintest stain
Our purest tears have rendered clear again.

Art thou thus killed ! The riches of thy shrine
Are fall'n to dust, though worshipped as divine ;
And kneeling there, it did invade thine eye,
Where each sharp grain begets an agony.
Oh, it is burning bitterness to find
Truth on the lip, and meanness in the mind ;—
To drink from the sweet stream, and then behold
A snake uncurling from the billow's fold.
And he, thy pilot, led thee to the rocks—
Who swore to shield thee from the mid-day sun ;
Who brought a string to bind thy loosened locks,
And so hath strangled the fond heart he won.
What fine-spun threads compose the net, wherein
The mind is taught to suffer ere it sin.
How shall the bird escape the fowler's strings,
Or soar, when selfish craft has stript its wings ?

For him, the heartless and unhallowed lord
Of the sweet world that waited on his word—
Oh, be his lot to find the fevered shame
Fly far from thee, and darken round his fame !
To range o'er hill and heath, by tempest tost,
And find no blessing like the love he lost.

TO AN EARTHLY BEAUTY.

No fairy I deem thee that paces by night
O'er a brook's pebbled bank, or a grass-covered height ;
No spirit art thou such as gleam through the deep,
Or inhabit the pearl-builed palace of sleep ;
I may not believe thee the fiction that breaks
On the poet's wild eye when his morning first wakes ;
No shadow that haunts on some sea-girdled ground
That can melt in a sunbeam or soar in a sound.
But a mortal I own thee, a child of our earth,
With a lip full of song and an eye full of mirth.
No chain may I find in a single bright hair,
Nor deem that a halo is hovering there ;
Yet methinks (though thy lip hath more Sappho than Eve)
I could well from thy hand stolen apples receive ;
And thy heart hath a corner where mine could have lain,
With a sigh or a song for the clank of my chain.

Yet think not I prize what those glances reveal
That awake in the eyes what the heart cannot feel ;
Thy voice hath a cadence that lingers on time,
And we suffer in prose all we picture in rhyme.
Though fancy bring forth, it is fact that conceives :
If we reach not the fruit we are sprinkled with leaves.

Thy spell may be surest when feeling comes forth,
Like a lily resisting the winds of the north ;
When the cheek's crimson summer is mantled with frost,
And hope in the spring of its promise is lost.
But give me the look that steals out from thy lash,
When the clear lid half closes, refining the flash !
It is then that we read on thy bosom's pure page
In a minute much more than is told in an age ;
Then the language of life we interpret in song,
And sin against right in sweet sighs for the wrong—
When beauties like waves wash their wealth on our shore,
And the grave of one joy is the cradle of more.

Oh, breathe on the flame so enkindled in mirth:
Could it last it might dry all the tears upon earth ;
And teach us that woman can sow through our sleep
A harvest of visions that sages might reap.
And well I discern, as crowned promises pass,
Like Banquo's bright issue, thou bearest a glass ;
Where graces uncounted and sparkling are seen
Like stars in the sea when no cloud soars between.
Oh, if here I could stay for a century on,
Till all that now dazzles is scattered and gone,
When borne to heaven's gate through the gardens of air,
Methinks I should ask—" if thy spirit was there?"

SONG FOR SHAKSPEARE'S BIRTH-DAY.

OH ! the names are unnumbered that Fame with a hand
All dazzling and trembling hath traced upon sand ;
But one must be lasting, still dear and divine—
And whose should it be, sweetest SHAKSPEARE, but thine ?

As youths at the tomb of the Painter are said
To touch with their pencils the life-laurelled head,
So the name of our SHAKSPEARE a music can raise,
To sweeten the strain that would soar in his praise.

Oh, the hours and the days that have glided along,
When the tide of the blood seemed an Avon of song ;
When the shapes that we saw, and the sounds that we heard,
Were the dreams and the glories, the world of his word.

Still, still to the fancy shall Rosalind cling,
From Ophelia's fair flesh still the violets spring :
Oh, the young heart had proved but a honeyless hive,
Had not time kept the blossoms of SHAKSPEARE alive.

May the tears of the gentle descend upon them,
While the shores have a flower or the sea hath a gem;
For WILL's wizard line is the famed purple hair,
Whose magical virtue secures us from care.

Sweet SHAKSPEARE, we seek not to measure thy flight,
Or add to thy rainbow superfluous light;
But like silkworms we offer our wealth up to thee,
As fed from thy own hallowed Mulberry-tree.

STANZAS FOR EVENING.

THERE is an hour when leaves are still and winds sleep on
the wave ;

When far beneath the closing clouds the day hath found a grave ;
And stars, that at the note of dawn begin their circling flight,
Return, like sun-tired birds, to seek the sable boughs of night.

The curtains of the mind are closed and slumber is most sweet,
And visions to the hearts of men direct their fairy feet ;
The wearied wing hath gained a tree, pain sighs itself to rest,
And beauty's bridegroom lies upon the pillow of her breast.

There is a feeling in that hour which tumult ne'er hath known,
Which nature seems to dedicate to silent things alone ;
The spirit of the lonely wakes as rising from the dead,
And finds its shroud adorned with flowers, its night-lamp
newly fed.

The mournful moon her rainbows hath, and mid the blight of all
That garlands life some blossoms live, like lilies on a pall ;
Thus while to lone Affliction's conch some stranger-joy may come,
The bee that hoardeth sweets all day hath sadness in its hum.

Yet some there are whose fire of years leaves no remembered
spark,

Whose summer-time itself is bleak, whose very daybreak dark.

The stem though naked still may live, the leaf though perished
cling,

But if at first the root be cleft, it lies a branchless thing.

And oh! to such—long, hallowed nights their patient music
send :

The hours like drooping angels walk, more graceful as they bend ;

And stars emit a hope-like ray, that melts as it comes nigh,

And nothing in that calm hath life that doth not wish to die.

1824.

PLEASURES OF PROMISE.

THINGS may be well to seem that are not well to be,
And thus hath fancy's dream been realized to me.
We deem the distant tide a blue and solid ground ;
We seek the green hill's side, and thorns are only found.

Is hope then ever so ?—or is it as a tree,
Whereon fresh blossoms grow, for those that faded be ?
Oh, who may think to sail from peril and from snare,
When rocks beneath us fail, and bolts are in the air !

Yet hope the storm can quell with a soft and happy tune,
Or hang December's cell with figures caught from June.
And even unto me there cometh, less forlorn,
An impulse from the sea, a promise from the morn.

When summer shadows break, and gentle winds rejoice,
On mountain or on lake ascends a constant voice.
With a hope and with a pride its music woke of old,
And every pulse replied in tales as fondly told.

Though illusion aids no more the poetry of youth,
Its fabled sweetness o'er it leaves a pensive truth ;—
That tears the sight obscure, that sounds the ear betray,
That nothing can allure the heart to go astray.

THE DOMINION OF PAIN.

In all that live, endure, and die,
In every vision of the brain ;
On Love's fond lip, in Pleasure's eye ;
The hermit's pulse, the warrior's vein ;
In hearts that pause and plunge again,
Frail victims of the passing hour,—
We find thy far dominion, Pain ;
We trace the foot-prints of thy power.
Though some are washed away by tears,
Whilst some survive the march of years.

Who cannot weep was never blest :
Would all were woeless that have wept ;
Would all that heaves might be at rest—
And sleep might come to those that slept !
My soul hath long its vigils kept
O'er sense of pain and dreams of death ;
And knows not why its course hath crept
Thus idly on for feverish breath.
Whilst hour by hour it longs to sleep,
I feel it doomed to watch and weep.

FICTION AND TRUTH.

THERE was a glare of light, a mass
Of things that perish as they pass ;
A fiction of the eye and ear,
And living hearts not more sincere.
Mine nursed a wound they could not heal,
Mine saw a scene they could not see ;
How little I for them might feel,
How less could they for me !

I knew not why I wandered there,
In secret hope or dim despair ;
Or in that dream of mute surprise
That leads us to a brink, and flies.
But there I breathed amid the throng,
As one who walks a foreign strand,
Watching the waves that roll along
And part him from his land.

When sudden as a star that drops
Behind the far-off forest tops,
Brief as the quick and quivering spark
On struggling waters wild and dark—
There came a spirit on my path,
A beauty dying in its birth,
Gifted with all that woman hath
Of music and of mirth.

A brow, the whitest world of thought
That ever pen or pencil wrought;
A breast as wonderful and warm
As ever love-dream failed to form.
Methought although of mortal mould
It held the flame of years to come:
I asked my heart—'twas sick and cold;
My hope—but it was dumb.

It came and claimed no kindred there;
But glanced on me, as though a hair,
Plucked from the brow of Time, might be
A chain to bind it unto me.
On me it gazed, an instant gazed,
Then passed through closing crowds again;
A pinnacle on the sea-foam raised
To strike the swimmer's brain.

Thus fairest things should vanish fleet
Ere earth hath stained their failing feet;
And all the blossoms she may shed
Are destined to adorn the dead.
I wished its momentary stay
Could be my term of life below;
Unknown to pass in still display,
By one regretted go.

Its presence came so brightly brief,
Its gladness bore no tinge of grief;
The cheek of hope but not its fears,
The eyes of love without their tears.
Alas! the eye that chased my pain
May now be weeping o'er its own;
The breast where angels might have lain
Tears may have turned to stone.

And where that light was found and lost
I counted o'er a cloudlike host,
Bright with the sunshine which they shade,
While all beneath them freeze and fade.
The flame had sunk where it began;
The scene was still a painted show.
They said 'twas truth—I turned to Man,
And sighed to find it so.

TO GREECE.

[A FRAGMENT.]

O ! MISTRESS of rich seas, whose every billow
Hath hymned a hope, or been some poet's pillow ;
Mother of mountain isles, whose every stone
Hath borne the glory of some name unknown !
Whose shores a holy echo still repeat,
And shew the sun-prints of immortal feet ;
Where but to thee shall youthful spirits turn,
Finding an orient cradle in thine urn !
O ! scenes, where HOMER lived and BYRON died,
Greece ! of the angel-sun the earthly bride,
How dost thou win our worship ! To thy shores,
The mind's first Eden though profaned by crime,
How flies untutored Poesy, and pours
Its song of triumph on thy hills sublime,
Pavillioned by the skies ! Thy temple-roof
Now forms the pavement for an impious hoof ;
And o'er the land a blighting breath is spread
To hide the heaven still bright above thy head—
A banner for thy cause, a mantle for thy dead !

THE SHADOWS OF LIFE.

THE secret world in human eyes
Is deluged still with tears ;
Our breath is turned to feverish sighs,
And nature nursed in fears.
Cannot life rend its thin disguise,
Or be what it appears !

All passion is a blazing brand
Thrown on a ready pile ;
Friendship a pressure of the hand ;
Pity a winter-smile ;
And hope but wind across the sand,
That forms, and fails the while.

Our life is as an idle boat
Along a winding river ;
An aimless arrow sprung remote
From an ethereal quiver ;—
And pilotless it still must float,
And aimless speed for ever.

Then let man build upon the grave
A hope that cannot sink ;
A wintry waste his foot must brave,
Yet may he find some brink :
Or haply drop within the wave,
Whose wine he thought to drink.

THE POET'S HEART.

'Tis like unto that dainty flower
That shuts by day its fragrance up,
And lifts unto a darkened hour
Its little essence-cup.

'Tis as the grape on which it lives ;
That pleasure-ripened heart must be
In sorrow crushed, or ere it gives
The wine of poesy.

Or like some silver-winged fly,
By taper tempted from its flight,
It sparkles, faints, falls quiveringly,
And mingles with the light.

And sure it bears a fortune such
As waits upon that graceful bird,
Whose music, mute to living touch,
At death's dim porch is heard.

And still the dolphin's fate partakes :
Though bright the line which pride hath given,
'Tis pain whose darting pencil wakes
The master-tints of heaven.

A mine where many a living gem
In cell so deep lies casketed,
That man sends down a sigh for them,
And turns away his head.

But not that dainty flower, the grape,
The insect's sufferance and devotion ;
The swan's life-ending song, and shape
Diviner with emotion ;—

And not the dolphin's sacrifice,
The mine's most rare and dazzling part—
O ! not all these could pay its price,
Or form one poet's heart.

A HISTORY OF LIFE.

[FROM AN UNPUBLISHED DRAMA.]

LIFE!—'tis the sickliest shadow that e'er crossed
The goodly green o' the earth ; the hoarsest sound
That ever smote the silver ear of night
From thunder-throated seas. Man hath not weighed
A thing so light as his own life, that seems
The strength of many things, centre of hope ;
And hath its little worlds—love, glory, gain—
Riding around, as buoyant and more brief.
How like the monarch of all life looks man ;
Yet doth a lean and livid worm out-reign
The crowned Napoleon in the human heart !
Whate'er our summer, ice begins and ends—
The cradle, and the coffin, of our year.
All earth is but an hour-glass ; and the sands
That tremble through are men. And as they pass
Some sparkle and would linger ; but the rest
Come sweeping heavily onward, and tread out
The unredeeming lustre—and all sink.
The starriest page that history hath traced,
In her own dubious twilight, is a tale

Of buried men that used their tears for ink ;
A tombstone for the tired, which tells of those
That wept and vanished, toiled and marvelled why.
And all the students of our life have looked
Bearded Ambition in the face, and laughed.
Themselves perchance had travelled far on foot,
The roots of knowledge nurturing with their blood ;
Yet reared they not a branch or bud to shade
Wearied adventure ;—while the few dry leaves,
Which Autumn swept from Eden, make a flame
That thaws no bond from ignorance and sloth.
So moves the visioned world ; so runs the tale
Studied in April. Nothing true survives
Save fiction ; which hath still the truest been,
And so less trusted—'tis a judging world.
Man idles in the sun, and finds a heath
To cross at eventide : the beam that flung
Freshness and strength upon his brow now leaves
His step unpiloted ; while naked Death
Comes like the shadow of the world abroad,
Blotting his features out. Thus is he born
That old Philosophy may smile ; and dies
That worms may thrive, and the thin poet write
An unread epitaph. This, this is Life,

THE WAVE.

[SUGGESTED BY AN EARLY RECOLLECTION OF A BEAUTIFUL
POEM BY SHELLEY, ENTITLED "THE CLOUD."]

A being I take from fountains that break
In the depths of the ocean sand,
And my form is curled through the yielding world
To freshen the living land.
And the sparkles I fling from my watery wing,
As it mounts to meet the day,
Are gems for the hair of the sea-girls fair
That rise on my shining way.
I pass by the place where the earth's cold race
Repose in silent cells;
And the lovely and lone have found a throne
On a heap of glistening shells.

I sing for hours to leaves and to flowers
That never beheld the moon,
But sprinkle their sheen of gold and green
To thank my lingering tune.

I glide like a smile o'er the coral pile,
With the ocean-snake entwined ;
And sweep in my track the dolphin's back,
Leaving a light behind.
Bright wealth on my wings for a hundred kings
From the sea's blue mine I bring ;
The loveliest glare that slumbers there
I waft like a waking thing,
While I strew the strands with diamond sands,
And to beauty a pearl I fling.

And every star on its cloud-built car
Beholds its dominion of light,
As I welcome each ray with a spark from the spray
That trembles and shines all night.
I waft some skiff where an eye on the cliff
Looks fearfully o'er the foam,
And save from the deck of some beautiful wreck
The riches of those that roam.
While all that have being in water are seeing
Their crystal casements through ;
As I dart where pride hath splashed and died,
And pain hath shrieked adieu ;
Where fear hath gasped, where hope hath clasped,
And love when life was new.

The cloud on high, the wave of the sky,
I choose for my shadowy bride,
And she comes sometimes from her shoreless climes,
And kisses my trembling tide.
But like all that is fair, on earth or in air,
She dissolves in silent pain ;
And weeps on my flood her silvery blood
That gushes in gentle rain.
Then I turn from my bower of the fresh sea-flower,
Which an emerald lamp hangs o'er ;
I moan farewell to my palace of shell,
Where the song-echo woke before—
And the night-spirits dim hear my last low hymn,
As I faint on the fading shore.

1823.

ON THE SICKNESS OF A CHILD.

A chilling fear pervades my breast,
For thee, my stricken child !
The hope within me is repressed,
For Death looks through my dream of rest
With aspect wan and wild.

A gloomy and a gathering fear,
A thought untold and deep.
My eyes perchance have scarce a tear,
But there are scenes full frequent here
That teach the heart to weep.

And mine hath wept, my blighted boy ;
It weeps and trembles now ;
To think how frail a thing is Joy,
When darkening doubts so soon destroy
The graces of its brow.

Our hopes should have, but humble wings,
When health must still be sought
In outward and unholy things,
Remote from the sublimer springs
Of feeling and of thought.

Spectre of Pride, art thou my own,
My little laughing child ?
Whose voice was as a wakening tone,
That might have into music grown,
And made my spirit mild :

Teaching my step once more to wind
Through childhood's grassy way,
And bringing back my infant mind,
When life was a delight refined,
And time kept holiday.

Yes, yes, thou art my own, although
Thy song be turned to sighs ;
Thy dimples made to cradle woe,
Thy cheeks' fair sunshine changed to snow,
And love hath left thine eyes.

Oh, yes, thou art my own—the leaf,
The budding of my tree ;
A green delight, a blossom brief,
Whose promised glory ends in grief,
Like things that fade and flee.

A harmony within my ears,
A brightness round my brow,
A growing warmth through wintry years,
A star above my tide of tears—
All these to me wert thou !

I gaze around the freshened earth
Which spring hath made so fair ;
I hear the lark-voiced morning's mirth ;
And then I look beside my hearth,
And find a winter there.

S U N S E T.

THE heavens are dyed with autumn,—the dim Day,
Stretched on its purple death-bed, sinks away.
Silence and Even (seldom found apart)
Come forth, to strengthen yet subdue the heart.
But ere thus, missioned with intenser joys,
They veil the deep, and lull the forest's noise;
Ere yet the truant winds have home returned,
To cool some leaf whose breast hath all day burned;
Ere o'er the waters steal night's misty feet,
And on the plains of heaven her children meet;—
Nature a moment pauses—nothing heaves
As Time looks back upon the path he leaves.
A scarce-felt flush is seen to live and die—
As if the sun re-oped his heavy eye;
Then by some tending cloud was fanned to sleep,
And bathed his burning forehead in the deep.
Lo! ere he drops, how fast the vapours ride
To dip their feathers in his wealthy tide;
While some to hover round his head repair,
And wind their pallid fingers through his hair:

Some flap their wings of snow amid his breath,
And on his bosom drink a golden death;
While others stretch their arms to make a path
Of gentle steps into his ocean-bath!

One swifter-footed star hath reached its throne,
Surveys the west, and rules the east alone:
To share that realm its radiant fellows fly,
Above the azure mountains of the sky—
There on the bluest summits take their stand,
To guard the monarch of that minstrel land;
And warn the night to draw around his rest
The last pale curtain of the purpling west.
All earth seems anchored on the sands of peace;
And life begins where sound and motion cease.
Charmed by the star-break all things stay their flight,
And the fond waters bid the sun "good night!"

THE END.

LONDON:

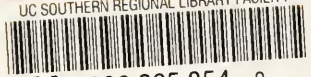
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